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SOME PALESTINIAN CULTS
IN THE GRECO-ROMAN AGE





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By

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SOME PALESTINIAN CULTS IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN AGE

By G. F. HILL

Read March 20, 1912

It is a little difficult in the present day for us to arrive at a true conception of the relations between Judaism and the religions which hemmed it round, and for a time overwhelmed it, during the Graeco-Roman period. To the ordinary person who is interested in Palestine, that country seems to be merely the home of the Jews and the cradle of Christianity. Of the existence of Phoenicians, Samaritans, Philistines, and Arabians he is dimly aware, thanks to incidental references in the New Testament. But that these names represent peoples active and flourishing at the time, even the serious student of the history of the period is likely to forget. The reason partly is that these peoples were much more receptive than the Jews of the veneer of Hellenistic civilization. That their individuality in respect of their religion was not wholly crushed is, however, clear to any one who goes into the matter. The object of this paper is to examine some of the evidence as to the existence in Hellenistic and Roman times of local cults and mythology in certain districts of Palestine. The great Phoenician cities,¹ and those of Arabia, I do not propose to touch upon, but shall confine myself to various cities in Samaritis and Judaea. And the evidence with which I shall deal will be drawn, so far as extant remains are concerned, almost entirely from coins, which have the advantage that they can be accurately dated and localized. They have, it is true, compensating disadvantages, especially in the obscurity of details caused by their smallness of size and still more by the usually degraded character of their workmanship and their bad preservation. Nevertheless, if we interpret them with due caution, we shall find in them much evidence about local cults, showing interpenetrations of Syrian, Phoenician, Philistine, and Egyptian strains,

¹ With these I have dealt in *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (1911), pp. 56 ff.

overlaid, of course, by the Hellenistic and Roman surface culture. The result is in many cases such complete confusion of ideas that it is impossible to disentangle them from each other; but we may rest assured that the people who believed in, or worshipped, these deities were hardly more clear than ourselves about their significance and origin.

With one exception, none of the coinage of these parts can be dated before the time of Alexander the Great. That exception is the much-discussed group of silver coins of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., generally attributed to the rulers of Gaza, and including the famous unique piece in the British Museum with the representation of Yahu or Yahweh (Pl. no. 1). These coins do not properly fall within the scope of the paper, and I forbear accordingly from dealing at length with this much disputed piece. I will only make two remarks. First, that the reading יהו seems no longer to be disputed; and that the balance of opinion is in favour of its naming the type, and not being a personal name of some dynast.¹

Second, this coin is only one of a large group, which represents the most miscellaneous assemblage of deities and monsters. Assyria and Egypt, not to speak of Greece, lend types to these coins (Pl. nos. 2, 3); and there seems to be little doubt that the coins were made by people who put on them any types which were likely to attract their customers. Thus the types of archaic Greek, notably Athenian, coins which circulated in the Philisto-Arabian district were freely imitated. The types, therefore, that we find on these Philisto-Arabian coins—as I prefer to call them, rather than coins of the ‘dynasts of Gaza’—do not necessarily indicate the existence in Philistia itself of the cults of the deities represented. It follows that the coin with the figure of Yahu does not prove that he was worshipped in Gaza. It may, indeed, be merely the local engraver’s attempt to represent the Jewish god.

I propose to deal first with one or two cults which are probably of purely Greek or Roman origin, proceeding later to subjects more Oriental in character.

Herod’s foundation of Caesarea had an extensive coinage, from the time of Nero to Gallienus. Its commonest type (Pl. no. 6) is the figure

¹ R. S. Poole’s objection that he knows of ‘no instance of the name of a god occurring without qualification of the name of the mint, as *Baal-Tarz* on coins of Tarsus’ (quoted by Driver, *Studia Biblica*, 1885, p. 19), will not hold. Thus we have the name of Atargatis on coins, probably struck at Hieropolis in Syria, without any place-name; although it must be admitted that these coins bear the names of rulers on the other side. In any case, however, it must be remembered that these coins of Gaza are quite exceptional, and would not conform to the ordinary rules of Phœnician mints.

of a goddess, wearing a mural crown (or sometimes a mere kalathos) and a short chiton, with her mantle hanging over her left arm; she wears a short sword at her side, her right foot rests on the prow of a ship; she leans with her left hand on a cross-headed standard, and holds in her right hand a *human bust*. About this bust, often barely distinguishable, some controversy has arisen.

The old writers very generally accepted the theory that the goddess is Astarte, and that she holds the head of Adonis—a theory which has no foundation except the statement in the tract *de Syria dea* that such a head came yearly from Egypt to Byblus, borne by waves and winds *θείη ναυτιλίη*. This identification of the head has now generally been discarded. The latest scholar to discuss the type (A. Heisenberg¹), while accepting the usual interpretation of the goddess as Astarte, rejects both the older view that the bust is Adonis, and a later view, due to Head,² which sees in it the bust of the reigning Emperor. There is, however, more to be said for this last interpretation before it is swept aside. It should be noted that, though Caesarea is perhaps the first by a few years to employ this type on its coins, it occurs also in various modifications at the following places: Tiberias in Galilaea, Neapolis, Nysa (probably), and Sebaste in Samaria, Aelia Capitolina and Anthedon in Judaea, Adraa, Eshbus, and Medaba in Arabia, and, to go farther afield, at Cremna in Pisidia. The figure, therefore, is either some very general personification, or a goddess whose cultus was widely disseminated. Further, this bust carried in the hand is not an attribute peculiar to her, since it (or at any rate a similar bust) is also carried by a *male* figure on coins of Caesarea and Aelia Capitolina. Heisenberg is somewhat unwilling to accept the evidence of places such as Adraa and Cremna; presumably because they are rather far afield. The evidence of Cremna is indeed important, since there the inscription on the coin identifies the figure as Fortune.³ The mural crown worn by the goddess in the Palestinian cities also identifies her as the City-Tyche; but of course Astarte may easily have played the part of City-goddess here, as she undoubtedly did elsewhere. It is, however, noticeable (though it has hardly been observed) that on practically all well-preserved specimens of the ordinary Caesarean type the goddess is seen to be armed with a short sword or parazonium girt at her waist. Another peculiarity is seen on certain coins on which the bust of this goddess, wearing a mural

¹ *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche* (1908), i, p. 202.

² Quoted by Wilson, *Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre in Pal. Expl. Fund. Qu. St.*, 1903, p. 243, note 2. Heisenberg (loc. cit.) disguises Mr. Head as 'Barclay'.

³ Brit. Mus. Catal. of Greek Coins, *Lycia, &c.*, pl. xxxv. 11.

crown, appears as type, instead of her complete figure; on this larger scale it is seen that her chiton is worn so as to leave one breast bare.¹ Now the parazonium and a similar disposition of the dress are not, so far as I know, associated with Astarte; but they are characteristic of certain representations of the goddess Roma.² We have thus a further indication that the personification of the City is at any rate the basal element in the type before us, the figure of the local city being assimilated to that of the goddess Roma. But if that is so, it is difficult to see whose bust she would hold if not that of the reigning emperor. The coins of Samaritan Neapolis afford a further slight confirmation of this view. In the reign of the emperor Philip there is a tendency to commemorate him and his sons jointly on the coins. Now as the reverse type of one of the coins of his reign³ there appear two figures of the goddess, each holding a bust. It seems obvious to conclude that these two busts are Philip the Elder and his son. It might, it is true, be argued that the duplication of the figure shows that each represents not the Tyche of the City, but the Genius of the Emperor or his son. Between these two conceptions there is considerable analogy, and it is quite possible that the type partakes of both. If the figure represents the Genius of the Emperor, *a fortiori* the bust represents the Emperor himself. But I take it that, even where the City-goddess is certainly identified with Astarte, as she is at Aelia Capitolina, it is as City-goddess, and not as Astarte, that she carries the bust in her hand. Whatever be the exact interpretation, we have in this type an illustration of the form taken by the cult of the Emperor in this part of the Roman world.

The other cults of Caesarea are such as we should expect to find in a city founded when it was: thus Zeus, Poseidon, Athena, Apollo, Dionysus, Ares, Helios, Demeter, Heracles, Hygieia are all represented, and the cult of Sarapis, to judge by the coins, played a great part here, as it did at Aelia Capitolina and Neapolis.

Nysa-Scythopolis, the ancient Bethshan, was traditionally a foundation of the Scythians who invaded Syria in the seventh century. The name Nysa, whatever its origin, naturally gave rise to a legend associating the place with the birth of Dionysus. His nurse was said to be buried there. The coins show her sitting on a throne nursing

¹ She is similarly represented on coins of Diospolis-Lydda.

² See, e.g., F. Gnechi, *I Tipi monetarii di Roma Imperiale*, pl. v. It is a reminiscence of the type of the Amazon-foundress, so common in Asia Minor.

³ It occurs attached to an obverse of the Empress Otacilia, but it is well known that reverse types belonging to an emperor were constantly used on the coins of his empress, unless there was some obvious inappropriateness in the conjunction.

the infant; but more curious than this is a representation of his re-birth from the thigh of Zeus. Two stages of the story are represented on the same coin (Pl. no. 5), this re-birth, and his reception by Nysa, who holds him in her arm; the two figures are combined as if they made a group. Finally, the coins illustrate some other episode, which I cannot identify, in the Dionysiac legend; the god appears to be threatening a small primitive idol with his thyrsus.

The coins of Raphia, the Judæan city on the extreme border towards Egypt, are also influenced by Dionysiac legend. Stephanus (s. v. 'Ραφία) records the tradition that the place got its name 'from the story of Dionysus'. The apparent connexion between the name of the city and the Greek word for seam (ράφή) is not too absurd for Greek etymologists to say that the place-name referred to the story of the infant Dionysus having been sewn up in the thigh of Zeus. His re-birth is not indicated on any of the extant coins of Raphia, as it is on those of Nysa; but the city-goddess is represented holding the infant on her outstretched hand (Pl. no. 4).

These are instances of the more purely Greek or Roman cults which prevailed in Palestine. The next city to which we come, Neapolis, brings us more within the Syrian sphere of influence. Neapolis stood on or, rather, near the site of the ancient Shechem, on the neck between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. By an exception to the general rule, the modern name *Nabulus* preserves the Graeco-Roman, and not the original native name. Yet the Samaritan element survived obstinately, and has survived, as is well known, to the present day. The sacred mountain Gerizim (Pl. no. 7) plays on the coins a part almost as important as Mt. Argæus at Caesarea in Cappadocia. It shows two distinct peaks, the steepness of which is doubtless exaggerated. On the left-hand peak is the temple which, since it first appears on coins of Pius, is doubtless the temple of Zeus Hypsistos which we know to have been founded by Hadrian.¹ Behind it is a small erection which may be an external altar. On the other (right-hand) peak is a construction which again is certainly rather an altar than a small temple. Since the mountain is doubtless supposed to be seen from the town, i. e. from the north, this smaller peak must lie to the west of the larger. We may perhaps identify it with the spur west of the main summit on

¹ Damascius, *vita Isid.* (ed. Westermann), 141. The Samaritan Chronicle (see Adler et Seligsohn, *Une Nouvelle Chronique Samaritaine*, 1903, p. 46) calls it a temple of 'Saphis', which may be meant for Jupiter Sospes; cp. 2 Macc. vi. 2: Zeus Xenios on Mt. Gerizim. Guérin (*Samarie*, p. 421) confuses Neapolis with Aelia Capitolina when he adduces Cassius Dio as an authority for the fact that Hadrian built a temple on Mt. Gerizim.

which are the ruins known as Khûrbet Lôzeh or Luzah¹; here the Samaritans still offer up sacrifice.

The coins clearly indicate the steps by which, as the Bordeaux pilgrim (333 A.D.) records, one ascended to the main temple; they were 300 in number. There were, as we see, chapels at intervals reminding us of many another *sacro monte*, Varallo before all; but no trace of them seems to have survived to the present day. Along the foot of the mountain was a long colonnade; an opening gave access to the foot of the stair and to the road, doubtless for wheeled traffic, which wound up the hill between the two peaks, branching about half-way up.

What form was taken by the Zeus Hypsistos worshipped in this temple? It has been thought² that he was the Zeus of Heliopolis, who certainly was, as we shall see, worshipped in the city. But of this there is no proof. The figure which is indistinctly visible in the temple on some specimens does not suggest the mummiform deity. A head of Zeus of the ordinary type occurs on a coin of Macrinus, and we also find him seated with Hera and Athena, making the Capitoline Triad. Now this last type occurs on the large coins of Antoninus Pius, in whose reign we also find for the first time the large representations of Mt. Gerizim. It seems probable therefore that the temple on that mountain was sacred to the ordinary Greek Zeus, who might be represented like Jupiter Capitolinus with Juno and Minerva. It may be added that the mountain is sometimes shown supported by an eagle, or in the hands of a figure of Nike; but no stress can be laid on this fact, since the eagle is also an attribute of the Heliopolitan Zeus³; and in many Oriental representations Zeus is supported by an eagle.⁴

The star or sun which appears in the field (sometimes the moon is present also) in association with the mountain indicates the solar nature of the deity worshipped there.

At Neapolis, Zeus Heliopolites occurs on coins of the Antonine period (Pl. no. 8). He is of the usual type, with whip and ears of corn, and accompanied by two bulls.⁵ His appearance on the coins of this period was doubtless prompted by the erection of the great temple of the god at Heliopolis by Pius. I need not go into the details of this well-known type, but will pass at once to the interesting type of the

¹ P. E. F., *Survey of W. Palestine*, ii, pp. 187, 192.

² Dussaud, *Notes de mythol. syrienne*, p. 51, henceforward cited as 'Dussaud' simply.

³ Dussaud, p. 15.

⁴ Cumont in *Festschr. für O. Benndorf*, pp. 291 ff.

⁵ On this type see especially Drexler in Roscher's *Lex.* ii. 1180 (Kewan) and Dussaud, pp. 29 ff., 117 ff.

Ephesian Artemis (Pl. no. 9). She is clad, like the Heliopolitan Zeus, in a sort of sheath, evidently of metal with panelled reliefs. She is veiled, and on her breast are represented two small figures (like wingless figures of Nike, holding a wreath between them). Her hands, extended as is usual in archaic cultus figures, rest on fillet-like supports. That these are real supports, not pendent fillets, is shown by the fact that on a well-preserved specimen they are seen to be topped by small birds (doves?), on which the hands of the goddess seem to rest. They have all the look of sceptres. She is flanked by two stags, which turn their heads to look up at her. On her head she wears a strange gear, resembling three plumes, supporting a structure which is usually obscure. Sometimes it resembles a cross-piece with three uprights standing on it; but on the best-executed or best-preserved specimens this structure is seen to be merely the façade of a temple, with four columns and a pediment. Now all these details, *except the doves on the tops of the supports*, are paralleled by the ordinary representations of the Ephesian Artemis.¹ But, considering the importance of doves in the local Syrian cults, this modification is significant.

Quite different from this goddess is another who appears on a coin of Faustina Junior. The rarity of this type (I know of only one instance, Pl. no. 10) points to her cult being of less importance. She has the ordinary Greek dress: long chiton with kolpos, and peplos falling over each arm in folds which suggest an archaistic treatment. She is veiled, and wears a head-dress which is unfortunately incomplete; it may be merely a polos, or it may be three plumes. In her hands, which project in the usual archaic or archaistic fashion, are either wreaths or phialae; and she is flanked by two long-legged birds, which may possibly be meant for peacocks.

There is a curious parallelism in the representations of Zeus Heliopolites and Artemis Ephesia on these coins. They serve as types for coins of the same size, but, when they first appear, Zeus appears on the coins of Marcus Aurelius, Artemis on those of his Empress Faustina Junior. It is only natural, of course, and according to custom, that the male god should be associated with the Emperor, the female with the Empress. But we shall not be too fanciful if we go farther, and see in the so-called Artemis the local consort of the Heliopolitan Zeus. At Heliopolis itself there was a triad consisting

¹ See especially Amelung in *Jahreshefte des oesterr. arch. Inst.*, xii (1909), pp. 172 ff.; Imhoof-Blumer in *Nomisma*, vi (1911), p. 11. Mr. H. R. Hall suggests that the temple-headress may have been derived from, or suggested by, the pylon-headress of Hathor in Ptolemaic times, as seen especially in the Hathor-headed sistra and models of sistra.

of Zeus, Aphrodite, and Hermes, to give them their Greek names. The Ephesian Artemis might, as a nature-goddess, be identified by the Neapolitans with Astarte-Aphrodite, and this identification is suggested by the doves—if doves they be—on which her hands rest. If the birds which accompany the other goddess are peacocks, the Neapolitan Greeks would probably call her Hera; that is the name which the Greeks gave to the consort of Zeus at Hierapolis.¹ It may be suggested that she is, at Neapolis, the consort of the Zeus Hysistos of Mt. Gerizim. We should then have the two pairs complete: first, Zeus Heliopolites and his consort, the stag-goddess, the so-called Artemis, and second, Zeus Hysistos and his consort Hera.

But there is yet a third goddess of an allied kind at Neapolis. In speaking of Caesarea we have already described the City-goddess holding the bust of an emperor. At Neapolis she sometimes holds Mt. Gerizim. But the point of interest is that she stands on a couchant lion; and we also find a goddess standing on a running lion. Both are representations of the 'Syrian Goddess', Atargatis, who functions as the City-goddess. Earlier writers describe a figure of 'Cybele seated between two lions', who is, as Dussaud has seen, no other than the same Syrian goddess of Hierapolis.²

Another Syrian cult prevailed for a brief time at Neapolis. On a coin of Elagabalus there is represented a conical or beehive-shaped baetyl, side by side with Mt. Gerizim, above a quadriga advancing to the front. An eagle with spread wings decorates the front of the baetyl. There can be no doubt that it is the sacred stone of Emesa, the god whom Elagabalus served as priest.³

The same cult prevailed at Aelia Capitolina during the reign of Elagabalus (Pl. no. 11). But the only type at that city which is of outstanding importance in connexion with the subject of this paper is the temple of the City-goddess, who was here, as already stated, identified with Astarte. Her temple⁴ stood on the site of the crucifixion, and her consort 'Jupiter', i. e. Baal or Adonis, was worshipped on the place of the Resurrection. Doubtless they had a joint temenos. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was afterwards erected on the same site, probably more or less on the same plan as the old temple; just as, after the destruction of the Marneion at Gaza, it was proposed by some to rebuild the Christian church on the same plan. This

¹ Lucian, *de Syr. dea*, 31, 32.

² Dussaud, p. 51.

³ Studniczka in *Röm. Mitt.*, xvi (1901), p. 272 f.

⁴ See Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche*, &c., i, p. 200 f.

question has been fully discussed by Heisenberg, so that we need not linger over it here. The goddess is represented holding the human bust, to which we have already referred.

Of the great cities of the Philistine coast, two only survived, or retained any degree of importance, in the times with which we are concerned. These were Ascalon and Gaza. Let us see first what literary records we possess of their cults. Ascalon was famous in the time of Herodotus for the worship of Aphrodite Ourania; Herodotus and after him Pausanias regard this cult as of very ancient origin. The other chief goddess mentioned in connexion with Ascalon is Derketo or Atargatis. To her was sacred a temenos not far from the city, with a large pool full of fish. The goddess had a woman's face and the body of a fish (or a woman's face and body to the waist, the rest being fish-like). Doves and all kinds of fish were sacred to her. The euhemeristic explanation of the story of Derketo was that she was drowned with her son Ichthys in the pool of Ascalon and devoured by fishes. According to another legend, the daughter of Derketo was Semiramis, who was brought up by doves.

Lucian, if he is the author of the tract *de Syria dea*, distinguishes Derketo (of Ascalon) from the goddess of Hierapolis (Atargatis), who was worshipped in human form; but there is little doubt about the connexion between them.¹ The Greeks identified both with Aphrodite.

We should expect to find the great god of the Philistines, Dagon, at Ascalon; St. Jerome knows him as 'idolum Ascalonis, Gazae et reliquarum urbium Philistiae'. But the identification of this god has become uncertain since the old view that he had the form of a fish is now generally discredited.²

In an inscription from Canopus, of A. D. 228, an Ascalonian dedicates to Zeus Helios Sarapis a figure of θεὸν πάτρι[όν] μου 'Hρ[ακ]λῆ Βῆλον ἀνείκητον.³

Another Syrian deity of Ascalon was known as 'Ασκληπιὸς λεοντοῦχος. The Neo-Platonic philosopher Proclus addressed a hymn to this god, as he did to Marnas of Gaza; but we know no more. He may have been the Phoenician Eshmun, represented in Syrian fashion with lion supporters. Or, again, he may have been Eshmun assimilated to Melqart-Heracles, with the lion-skin; such a contamination was found at Citium in Cyprus.⁴

¹ See, e. g., F. Baethgen, *Beiträge zur semit. Religionsgesch.*, p. 74.

² See Dussaud, p. 77 f.

³ S. de Ricci in *Arch. f. Papyrusforsch.*, ii, 1903, p. 450, no. 87; Dussaud, loc. cit.

⁴ See the speculations in Movers, *Phönizier*, i, p. 534; Stark, *Gaza*, p. 592.

What light do the coins throw on these literary records? We may, to begin with, rule out of court the remarkable fourth-century stater,¹ struck at some city on the Phoenician coast, which represents a sea-god, fish-like from the waist downwards, holding trident and wreath. The weight of evidence points to this coin having been struck in Northern Phoenicia, and not at Ascalon or Ashdod.

The City-goddess of Ascalon appears constantly on the coins (Pl. no. 12) from Augustus to Geta; she stands upon a prow, holds a naval standard and aphlaston, and is regularly accompanied by a dove and an altar of somewhat peculiar form, with three projections at the top which have caused it to be described as a trident. The dove also appears as the attribute of a goddess who figures on coins from the time of Antoninus Pius onwards (Pl. no. 13). She wears on her head, not a turreted crown, but a crescent.² She stands, not on a prow, but on a Triton, who holds aloft a cornucopie; she carries, not a standard, but a sceptre; and the dove is in her hand, not in the field of the coin.

From the evidence of the numerous other representations of the marine Astarte in Phoenician coast-cities, it is certain that the former goddess is Astarte functioning as City-goddess. Is the other goddess also Astarte, or is she Atargatis (Derketo)? We know that Derketo was worshipped at Ascalon in a semi-piscine form; but it does not follow that there was not also a human representation of her, since in other cities inland, such as Hierapolis, this fish-form did not prevail. The sea-monster on which the goddess stands would express her marine nature. The dove was also sacred to her. Dussaud has insisted on the view that the lunar crescent alone, uncombined with the solar disk, is never the attribute of Atargatis. Possibly, however, at the late period with which we are concerned, a period of great confusion between various deities and their attributes, the rule which he asserts may have been relaxed. There was, in any case, so much that was peculiar in the cults of Ascalon, that we cannot deny the possibility of such a modification.

Beside the City-goddess type, there appears on the coins throughout the Imperial period another deity, whose name is fortunately inscribed on some of the coins of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius (Pl. no. 14).

¹ B. M. C., *Phoenicia*, p. cxliv, pl. xiv. 1; *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xxxi, p. 63, pl. iv. 33.

² This is perfectly clear on many specimens, and Dussaud's statement (*op. cit.*, p. 99) to the contrary must be corrected. If he is right in denying lunar character to Astarte (p. 84), he must be wrong in assuming this goddess to be Astarte.

This is Phanebalos.¹ The name is obviously a transcription of some Phoenician word containing the element בעל, and we are immediately reminded of the epithet of Tanith בן בעל, which is explained as 'face of Baal' or 'manifestation of Baal'.² It is true that Tanith was a female deity, whereas the figure on the Ascalonian coins has generally been described as male. And male I am inclined to think it is, although on some coins the dressing of the hair, the long skirt and broad hips give it an extraordinarily feminine appearance. The name too has a masculine termination, but since it might be an adjective of two terminations we can lay no stress on this. On a coin of Hadrian there appears in the field beside the figure a sign which looks like an attempt to reproduce the symbol of triangle, disk, and horns, the so-called 'sign of Baal', which is constantly found on Carthaginian votive tablets, and elsewhere.³ This symbol, it is to be remembered, may belong not to Tanith, but to Baal-Hamman; in any case, it is too obscure on the coin in question to bear much stress.

Phanebalos wears a helmet, and wields a weapon which, Dussaud⁴ maintains, is not a sword but a harpe. The dress is probably a cuirass; on some specimens the pteryges are clearly represented, but on others the skirt is unusually long. In the left hand are a small circular shield and a long palm-branch. The figure sometimes stands on a pedestal. Finally, on the latest coins on which the god is represented, he assumes an attitude similar to that of Sarapis, as that god appears on coins of the same date, with right hand raised (Pl. no. 15). His weapon, the harpe, disappears, and in

¹ First correctly deciphered by Imhoof-Blumer, *Rev. Suisse de Num.*, 1903, p. 129.

² G. A. Cooke, *North Semitic Inscr.*, p. 132 f., where it is also noted that Robertson Smith explains the epithet as 'having the face of Baal', i.e. bearded or androgynous. But the theory of a primitive androgynous deity is at present under a cloud. Prof. Cooke and Prof. A. R. S. Kennedy incline to confirm the suggestion made in the text of the equation בן בעל = ΦΑΝΗΒΑΛΟC, and the latter reminds me of the equation פנניל = ΦΑΝΟΥΗΛ. Dussaud (op. cit., p. 6) regards the Carthaginian symbol of combined disk and crescent as the 'traduction par l'image de l'expression *pené Béal*'. Mr. L. W. King writes: 'In Babylonian theophorous names of the Achaemenian period the combination of *pānu* "face" with the name of a deity is not uncommon. It is thus possible that we may connect the origin of Phanebalos with *Pāni-Bēl*, the abbreviated form of *l'āni-Bēl-adaggal* (lit. "I behold the face of Bēl"); cp. the similar abbreviation in the name *Pāni-ilu* (= פניאל), which occurs in a business document of the time of Artaxerxes I.'

³ *C. I. S.*, i. 265 and *passim*; Cooke, loc. cit.; Hill, *Coins of Ancient Sicily*, pl. x. 9, xv. 18 (coins of Sicily and Cossura).

⁴ Op. cit., p. 76.

the field we see a thunderbolt. The connexion with Zeus—and that is only another way of saying Baal—is thus established. Now of course a goddess intimately connected with Baal might use his attribute; but the balance of probabilities seems to me to indicate that we have in our mysterious deity a male ‘manifestation of Baal’ as a war-god, and not a goddess. After all we do not know enough about the meaning of the term פִּנְבַּל to be able to assert that, because at Carthage it was an epithet of a goddess, therefore at Ascalon it could not be the epithet of a god.

It would be idle to attempt to disguise the fact that this explanation of the nature of Phanebalos is a tissue of conjectures. But one can only state the arguments on either side fairly. The only other solution proposed is due to Dussaud. He sees in the deity a solar god (because of the harpe), of the class of Bel-Kronos, and identifies him with the Herakles-Belos whom we know, from the Canopus inscription, to have been worshipped at Ascalon.¹

Ascalon provides us with a number of other curious types. Under Antoninus Pius first appears a remarkable building which appears to consist of a series of four doorways, one within (i.e. really beyond) the other (Pl. no. 16). The Egyptian element in the architecture is strong, being perceptible not merely in the uraei which decorate two, if not three, of the architraves, but in the columns flanking two of the entrances. The type probably represents the approach to some sanctuary through a series of doorways—an adaptation of the Egyptian temple-plan.

In the same reign also we meet for the first time with the type of a male deity, apparently Osiris, with his usual attributes of flail and sceptre, but accompanied by three lions which stand beside and before the basis which supports the figure. On later coins he stands in true Syrian fashion on the lions (Pl. no. 17). On the earlier coins he wears a plain kalathos; on the later he has the atef crown; and on the latest he no longer holds a sceptre, but raises his right hand in the attitude usually adopted by Sarapis on late coins. We have just noted that this attitude is also affected on the latest coins by Phanebalos (who consequently has to dispense with the harpe, as Osiris with his sceptre); and the same is true of Poseidon (whose dolphin is consequently placed in the field instead of in his hand). The same

¹ He goes further and identifies Herakles-Bel with Dagon. Dagon may be, as he argues (p. 79), connected with agriculture; but the supposed representation of the deity in question as holding ears of corn in his hand (De Sauley, *Num. de la Terre Sainte*, p. 189, no. 4) is surely the ordinary type with the palm-branch, misdescribed by Reichardt.

tendency affects Marnas on the coins of Gaza about this time. Is it due to assimilation to the ordinary attitude of Imperial statues in the act of *adlocutio*?

Coins of Caracalla, Severus Alexander, and Maximinus show us a bust of Isis, below which are sometimes discernible three lion's heads—shorthand for the whole animals (Pl. no. 18). We may assume that at Ascalon there was a pair of deities, adapted from Osiris and Isis, represented like Syrian gods, standing upon lions. A statue of Isis suckling Horus, in the ordinary form, was found at Ascalon.

Pius also introduced on Ascalonian coins the type of the Dioscuri with a crescent, representing Astarte, between them. This group I have discussed elsewhere.¹

Finally, under Macrinus appears the type of a nude Heracles, holding a small Nike and his club. I take this to be the Heracles-Belos of the Ascalonians to which we have already referred; the Nike gives significance to the epithet *ἀνείκητος* applied to this god in the Canopus dedication.

Thus, at Ascalon, so far as we can interpret the evidence, we find nothing of specially Philistine character, but a highly characteristic mingling of Phoenician, Syrian, and Egyptian elements, which is quite in place geographically. The local colour of Gaza is quite different.²

Two passages in Stephanus of Byzantium³ form the starting-point of any consideration of the cults and legendary history of Gaza. He says: 'It was called *Aza*, as well as Gaza, and to the present day the Syrians call it *Aza*, from Azon son of Herakles. But some report the legend that it was founded by Zeus, and that he deposited there his private treasure, for *gaza* is the Persian word for money. But it was also called *Ione*, from Io who came thither by sea and abode there. And also it was called *Minoa*, because Minos, with his brothers Aeacus and Rhadamanthys, leaving his own country, founded⁴ this city. Whence also there came to be the temple of the Cretan Zeus among them, whom even in our time they called Marnas, which is interpreted Cretan-born. For the Cretans call maidens thus: *marnans*. And again: 'The sea from Gaza as far as Egypt was called Ionian; for

¹ J. H. S., xxxi (1911), p. 62 (Tripolis).

² A statement in S. A. Cook, *Religion of Ancient Palestine*, p. 33, that 'in Merneptah's reign we hear of a man of Gaza who is described as a servant of Baal', is based on a mistranslation in Breasted, *Ancient Records*, iii, § 630. Mr. A. H. Gardiner informs me that the translation 'there went up the servant of Baal Roy, son of Zeper, of Gaza' should be 'there went up the servant (or retainer) Baal-Roy' &c. No conclusion can be drawn from this theophorous name as to the worship of Baal at Gaza in Merneptah's time (thirteenth century B.C.).

³ s. vv. Γάζα and Ἰόνιον πέλαγος.

⁴ Reading ἔκτισεν for ἐκάλεσεν.

Gaza also was called Ione, from Io, and has a cow beside her in the image representing her.⁷

Minos is represented on a coin of the year A.D. 131-2. I do not know of a well-preserved specimen; but he appears to wear a short chiton or cuirass and to hold in his right hand a long branch, in his left a spear. On the reverse of these coins is a tree, but of what kind it is difficult to say. This association of a founder with a tree has a Cretan air. Thus at Aptera the hero Ptolioitos stands in adoration before a tree; at Phaestus Herakles stands beside one; at Priansus a palm grows beside the throne of the goddess; and we shall have to mention immediately some of the Cretan figures seated in trees. As Svoronos has remarked of such representations,¹ 'we may say that they are the most characteristic feature of the Cretan coinage.' They certainly reflect an important aspect of Cretan religion.

The City-goddess of Gaza is shown resting on a sceptre and holding a cornucopias; a heifer stands beside her, bearing out the passage just quoted from Stephanus (Pl. no. 20). When Io is present in human form with the City-goddess, the heifer, which would be tautological, is omitted. But for the benefit of those who would be unable to recognize Io without her attributes, her name is then always written beside her.

We now come to the most remarkable of the Gazaeen deities, Marnas. This god played an important part in the struggle between Christianity and paganism at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. To the Christians of the time he was almost as deadly an enemy as Sarapis. The struggle is described in the most vivid way by Mark the Deacon in his life of Porphyry, bishop of Gaza—a narrative which is not surpassed in human interest by any work of its time.²

Mark identifies Marnas with Zeus Kretagenes, and describes his temple, the Marneion, as the most famous of all temples. Allowing for the writer's local pride, we may suppose it to have been of considerable importance. His description is not clear, and the Latin translation in which it was alone accessible until recently does not make it clearer. The building appears to have been circular, with a double portico or peristyle, one set of columns within the other, and a central dome. Mark's description of the dome is *ἀναφυσητὸν κιβώριον, καὶ ἀνατεταμένον εἰς ὕψος*. 'An inflated cup extended

¹ *Rev. Belge de Num.*, 1894, p. 127.

² It is nothing less than extraordinary that the Greek text of this narrative, which has been accessible since 1874 in Haupt's transcript (*Abhandl. Berl. Akad.*) and since 1895 in the Teubner edition, is still ignored by some of the most learned writers on archaeology and religion.

vertically' sounds like an elliptical dome¹; but I am inclined to think it merely means a dome of the ordinary kind. The coins showing the temple (Pl. no. 19) unfortunately do not help us, the engraver having been content with the most conventional indication of two columns supporting an architrave with a pediment above. Probably this is meant for the façade of the building. This summary rendering may be due to the fact that two figures had to be represented in the temple, and the engraver did not feel capable of giving many details of the architecture as well.

The god is shown in the temple confronting a figure resembling the ordinary Greek Artemis as huntress. Beside him is written his name MAPNAC.² Eckhel, puzzled by the Apolline appearance of the god, suggested that the word was not his name but an epithet of the city. But in that case one would expect an adjectival form. What is more, this inscription is found only in association with this particular figure; were it an epithet of the city, it might be expected to appear elsewhere, with other types.

Who was this Marnas? We have already seen that he was identified with the Cretan Zeus. Epiphanius,³ speaking of the worship of

¹ Miss Gertrude Bell points out that such a shape is extremely probable in itself; but the earliest Persian dome is probably about A.D. 226, whereas the Marneion, it would seem, was most likely of the second century. Stark (*Gaza*, p. 599) had long ago recognized that the building was domed, and of the Pantheon type. It is possible, of course, that Mark is using the word *κυβόριον* technically, in the sense of a canopy of some sort. Dräseke (*Ges. Patrist. Untersuch.*, 1889, p. 235) supposes the word to have the sense of the seed-vessel of the water-lily, and to be used to indicate a dome. Strzygowski has devoted a brief passage to the subject in his *Kleinasien* (1903, p. 101); it is unfortunate that he seems not to have consulted the original Greek, instead of the Latin translation, of the life of Porphyry. If the Greek is difficult to understand, the Latin is sheer nonsense. Strzygowski's instinct seems, however, to have kept him on the right track: 'it is probable', he writes, 'that it was not, as Dehio assumes, a hypaethral central room with two circular porticoes, but a domed room with gallery and *opaion*, or outlet for smoke. For only in the case of a closed central room could they have entertained any idea of employing the scheme of the temple for a church.' He goes on to refer to the supposed *opaion*, which naturally could not exist in a hypaethral building; but since this feature is only assumed in order to make sense of the Latin translation, and has no basis in the Greek, we need not consider it further. As regards the possibility of a hypaethral central room, it is true that Mark, in a later passage (c. 84), speaks of the hypaethrum of the temple; but this was after the inner temple had been burnt, and any roof which it had possessed was destroyed; I do not think he is using the word in its technical sense.

² The full form is clear on some specimens, which were unknown to those who doubted whether it referred to the figure of the god.

³ *Ancoratus*, 109 C (i, p. 209, ed. Dind.).

mere mortals, instances *Μαρνᾶς δοῦλος Ἀστερίου τοῦ Κρητὸς παρὰ Γαζαίοις*, *Κάσιος δὲ ὁ ναύκληρος παρὰ Πηλουσιώταις*. Now Asterios or Asterion was a name of the Cretan Zeus.

But we can go a little further than this. I have noted that two deities seem to have been worshipped together in the Marneion. Mark the Deacon, in fact, speaks of the 'images of the gods' which were hidden by the priests when the temple was threatened with destruction; there were, then, more than one cultus-image. The god, on the coins, appears to be nude, and perhaps to hold a bow. This Apolline appearance does not prevent his having been a Zeus; the Zeus Kasios of Pelusium, mentioned by Epiphanius, was similarly youthful.¹ But Crete furnishes us with the best parallel, in the youthful Zeus Velchanos of Phaestus. Overbeek² has already noted the apparent connexion between this Velchanos, as he appears seated in a tree, and the so-called Europa, also in a tree, on the coins of Gortyna. And this Europa, as Svoronos maintains,³ is really in all probability the Cretan Britomartis, who is well known to have been identified with Artemis, more particularly in her capacity of huntress. Now the lover of Britomartis was Minos, himself a hypostasis of Zeus. Britomartis is glossed as 'sweet maiden', and the second part of her name is plausibly connected with the Cretan word *marna* = maiden. I suggest that *Marnas* and *marna* would stand to each other as *κόρος* or *κοῦρος* and *κόρα*.⁴

Modern critics have preferred to see in Marnas a Syrian name, equivalent to 'Our Lord'.⁵ Modern, but not the most modern critics, have also shelved the whole of the literary records about the connexion between Crete and Gaza as the invention of scholars. It is remarkable that the whole of the recent evidence⁶ about the

¹ If the young, Apolline Zeus Kasios of Pelusium was of the same origin as we shall see is probable in the case of the Zeus of Gaza, we can well understand how the name 'Ionian' came to be applied to the sea which washed the coast from Gaza to Pelusium. 'Ionian' meant, not the sea of Io, as Stephanus supposed, but the sea of the children of Javan, from 'the isles afar off'.

² On the youthful Zeus, *Kunstmythol.*, ii, pp. 194 ff.

³ *Rev. Belge*, 1894, pp. 113 ff.

⁴ On *Ζεὺς Κοῦρος* in Crete see Miss Harrison's article in *B. S. A.*, xv, pp. 308 ff.

⁵ F. Baethgen, *Beiträge zur semit. Religionsgesch.*, p. 65 f. Hall (*Oldest Civilization of Greece*, p. 320), however, suggested that the word need not be Semitic at all.

⁶ See the summary in A. J. Evans, *Scripta Minoa*, pp. 77 ff. To the evidence there mentioned must be added that from Tell es-Safi (Gath). The Palestinian pottery was seen to be Aegean by Welch (*B. S. A.*, vi, pp. 117 f.), but its Cretan character and date were established independently by Thiersch (*Archäol. Anzeiger*, 1908, pp. 378 f.) and Hall (*P. S. B. A.*, 1909, p. 235). Finally,

connexion between Crete and Philistia, overwhelming as it is, should still be ignored by some writers on Palestinian archaeology. I think that the facts that have been briefly stated above help not a little to confirm the view of the Cretan origin of Gaza, if it needed confirmation; that the two deities, looking like Apollo and Artemis, in the temple at Gaza, are Marnas and his consort Britomartis, the Cretan Zeus and the Cretan Artemis, connected in name in the same way as Zeus and Dioné; and that the name Marnas is probably Cretan in origin, its Syrian appearance being fortuitous.

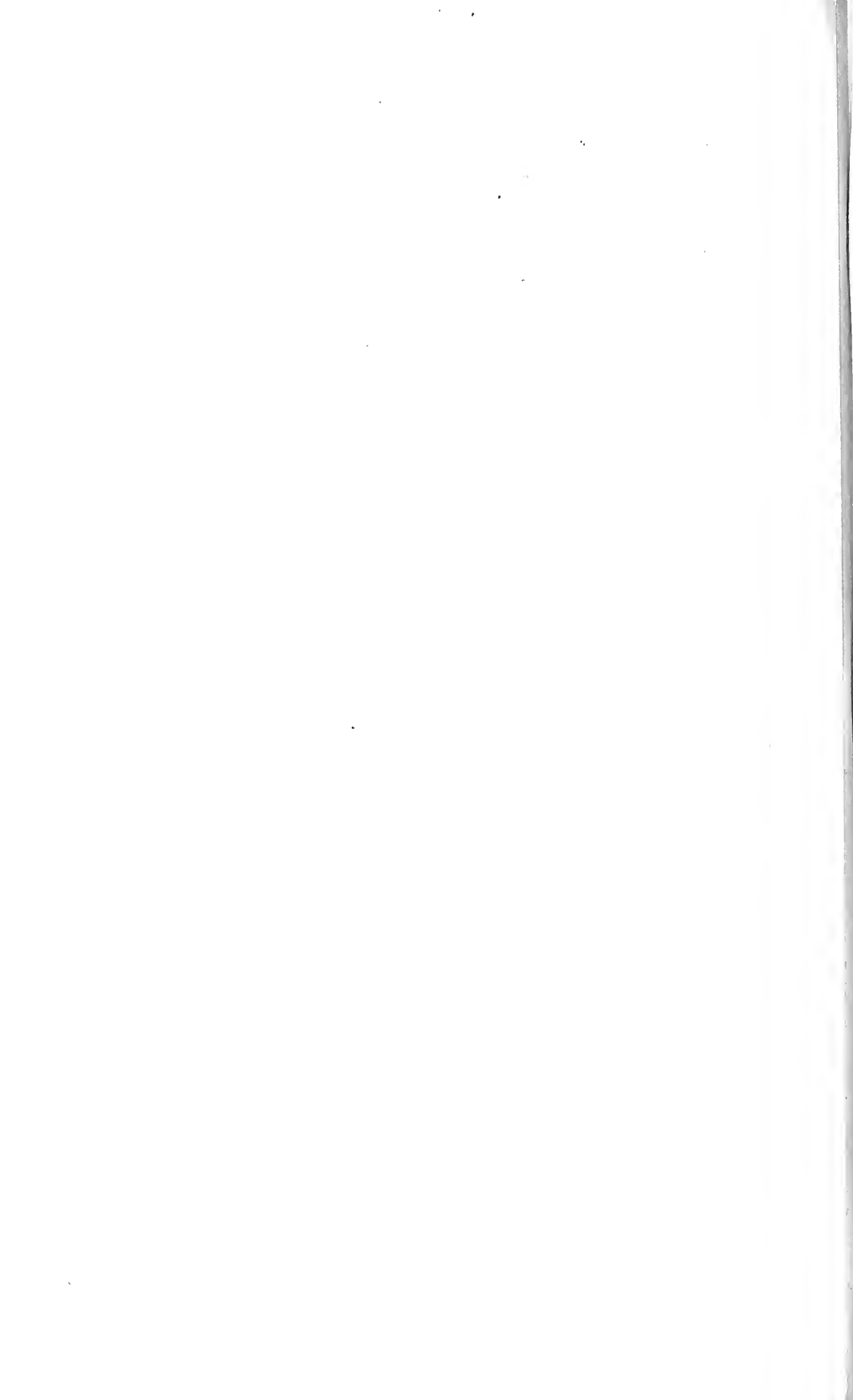
The approximation of Marnas to the ordinary Greek Zeus is carried out further on a coin of Gordian. He is still a slight, youthful-looking figure; he holds a thunderbolt in his left arm; sometimes there is an eagle at his feet, or he is crowned by a Nike standing on a column behind him. He raises his right hand, in the attitude which I have already noticed as coming into fashion on the later coins of Ascalon.

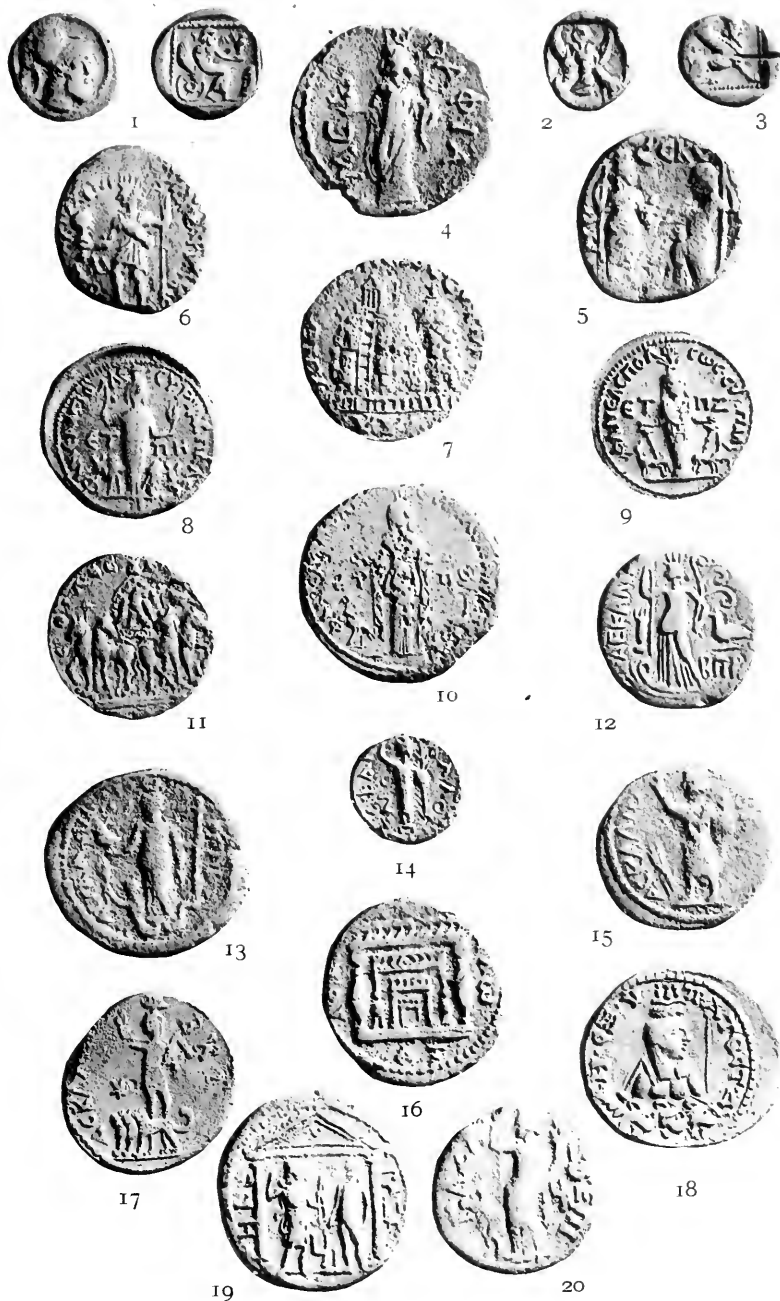
Whatever may have been the real nature of Marnas, his importance to the city of Gaza was such that the whole coinage, except in the very earliest period, bore his mark, even if he was not actually represented. This mark was the Phoenician letter *mem*, the initial of his name. Damascius the Neoplatonist enlightens us on this point; for it is doubtless to this letter that he refers in a passage describing signs which are sacred to various divinities: 'as, with the Egyptians, the sign called *tet*, consisting of one upright straight line and three cross lines, one at the top and two below that; and again, another sign with the Heliopolitans, and with the Gazaeans yet another, which is sacred to Zeus.'¹

This sketch of the numismatic evidence relating to the cults and legends of the neighbours of the Jews in the Graeco-Roman age is, I am only too well aware, incoherent and, in parts, speculative. But perhaps it may serve to indicate to Semitic scholars that there is a considerable body of evidence which, though obscure and difficult to handle, cannot altogether be neglected by students of Palestinian religion.

Mackenzie has found similar evidence in his excavations at Bethshemesh (*Pal. Expl. Fund Qu. St.*, 1911, pp. 141 f.).

¹ *Damascii Successoris Dubitationes*, ed. Ruelle (Paris, 1889), ii, p. 127 f. (fol. 300 r.). Sir Arthur Evans suggests that this supposed *mem* at Gaza is really a modification of the swastika-symbol.





PALESTINIAN CULTS





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